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SUBJECT: DEMARCHE: TURNING OFF THE CEIRPP UN-SPONSORED
ISRAEL-PALESTINE EVENT IN ROME 3/22-23/07

¶1. (U) This is an action request. Department requests USUN urge UN Undersecretary General Gambari and/or Secretary General Ban to persuade the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (CEIRPP) to cancel its event on Israel-Palestine scheduled for March 22-23 in Rome. Department also requests Embassy Rome urge the Government of Italy at the highest level possible to remove their support for this event. Department requests that this demarche be delivered no later than February 2. Posts should draw freely from background information in paras 3-4 below when making these points. End action request.

¶2. (SBU) Objectives: Department instructs USUN and Embassy Rome to pursue the following objectives:

-- Note that, while we appreciate the intentions of the Government of Italy to assist the Lebanese and Palestinian people, the U.S. is opposed to this initiative, which is particularly unhelpful at this time when there are promising efforts to renew discussions on the Middle East, including the February 2 Quartet meeting in Washington and a later planned trilateral meeting with Secretary Rice, PM Olmert and PA President Abbas.

-- Emphasize that such an event, which will inevitably become a forum for one-sided criticism of Israel, will poison the international environment and make it harder for both sides to move forward towards negotiations.

-- Emphasize that the Italian proposal to reorient the event to address "alliance of civilization" issues is not likely to be successful. Note that there is already a UN organization, the Alliance of Civilizations, to address the issue. Additionally, UNESCO has its own "Dialogue of Civilizations" along the same lines. We should not duplicate the activities of these organizations in the CEIRPP.

-- (For Rome) Note that we do not support the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (CEIRPP), which perpetuates the UN's unhelpful bias on the Israel-Palestinian conflict and makes no contribution to helping the parties come together to resolve their differences.

-- (For Rome) Note also that, particularly in light of Italy's command of UNIFIL, Italy should take special care to maintain a balanced position on Middle East questions. Stress that by supporting this event, Italy will be aligning itself in the public eye to the discredited CEIRPP.

-- (For USUN) Express U.S. concerns about the impact of this event on the UN's relationship with the U.S., specifically that one of the first events under the new UN leadership will be seen by the U.S. Congress and public as

yet another example of UN-sponsored Israel bashing.

13. (SBU) Background: At the request of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Right of the Palestinian People (CEIRPP) and the Palestinian PermRep in New York, Italy has agreed to host an ill-considered event on Israel-Palestine on March 22-23 in Rome. The Italians support this event as part of their post-Lebanon-conflict commitment to refocus international attention on the Palestinian question. On January 20, the Italian Embassy in Washington, DC, delivered an aide memoire announcing their intention to "formulate suggestions for (the CEIRPP) event's success." The note continues that Italy would like the discussion to remain focused on areas of common ground rather than the "condemnatory and argumentative tones (Israel bashing) that characterize debates on the Israel-Palestine dispute at the UNGA."

14. (SBU) Background cont.: Despite the conciliatory and balanced approach planned by the Italians, the U.S. has a number of concerns about this event:

-- Despite the best intentions of the Government of Italy, this event is likely to devolve into a divisive, argumentative, and condemnatory platform, which will do nothing to bring the parties together. While we recognize Italy's desire, due in part to its lead role in UNIFIL, to assist the Lebanese and Palestinian people, this event will not provide any tangible benefits to either group and will

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only perpetuate the common view that the UN can not address the issue with balance.

-- The U.S. finds this initiative unhelpful to the Secretary's recent efforts to renew discussions on the Middle

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East Peace Process (including pursuing a two-state solution), beginning with the Quartet meeting on February 2.

-- The timing is inopportune for the new leadership at the UN. At a time with the new Secretary General and his team should be making particular efforts to enhance the UN's relationship with the U.S., this event would be seen in Congress and by the American people as another example of UN-sponsored Israel bashing.

-- The U.S. does not support and is actively trying to terminate the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (CEIRPP), which perpetuates the UN's unhelpful bias on the Israel-Palestinian conflict and makes no contribution to helping the parties come together to resolve their differences.

-- This event will cover similar ground to other UN organizations - the Alliance of Civilizations and UNESCO's "Dialogue of Civilizations."

15. (U) Point of contact: Responses and follow-up inquiries should be slugged for Raymond Hotz, IO/UNP. Department appreciates Posts' assistance.
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